

**Rodrigo Hernández***beautiful he**stirs up still things*

Bel Ami

709 N Hill St., Suite 103, Los Angeles, CA 90012

February 18 – March 29, 2025

Opening reception Tuesday, February 18 6-9pm

Frieze Los Angeles

3027 Airport Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90405

Booth F11

February 20 – 23, 2025

“The only true voyage... would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes... to see the hundred universes that each of them sees.”

- Marcel Proust

The artist, lying in bed next to his partner, in a half-waked slumber, is sensing more than thinking. He is mystified at how they came to be together, sharing this quiet, unrushed moment. Peering out the window, he observes the last hours of sunlight as the day nears its conclusion. He turns to his lover, brings his face nearer with both hands, and while caressing his cheek with a flutter of eyelashes asks him, “Do you know what this is called?” “No,” his partner replies. Even in this expression of closeness, he intuits the inherent opacity of the world. Perhaps the most defining aspect of phenomenological experience is our relative inaccessibility to one another. “My mum used to do this when I was a kid and she called it a butterfly kiss.” How does his partner perceive this moment? And what does a butterfly feel as it beats the air with its wings?

Rodrigo Hernández often begins conjuring an exhibition with such anecdotes and questions. Referencing diverse sources from Mexican pre-Columbian imagery, to European and Latin American modernisms, and global literature, philosophy and science, Hernández constructs surreal scenarios to speculate on the nuances of perception and the murky territory of memory and imagination. Not knowing is part of the pleasure in his epistemological and artistic explorations. Acknowledging that we don't have many answers, his work suggests we may not even know enough to ask the right questions. However, the inquiry itself—more precisely, our avidness to connect to other living things—evokes a susceptibility to the idea, both curious and enticing, that we may not be so disconnected from each other.

For this two-part exhibition taking place at Bel Ami and Frieze Los Angeles, Rodrigo Hernández builds minimal dreamlike environments, each with just one painting, one sculpture and a site-specific pedestal display. In different ways, the art objects and platforms set the stage for an unexpected encounter with something both familiar and strange. Pedestals, low to the ground, resemble platform beds, supported by L-shaped plywood headboards. They are not for resting. Rather, they ask if in some sense we are already asleep, wandering through a waking dream. Upon each platform, a bronze sculpture of a human head rests on its side, reminiscent of Constantin Brâncuși's ovoid *Sleeping Muse*, but here the representation is hollow, a vessel hoping to be filled.

On an adjacent wall, a small painting of an urban landscape is also turned on its side, rotated to a vertical orientation, as if seen by a person lying down in bed. Over this steep horizon, an image of a butterfly in repose; we can only hypothesize about its relationship to the city backdrop. On second glance, we realize the composition reflects a human point of view; we know that butterflies perceive a much wider palette, including ultra-violet and that they possess an inner magnetic feeling that allows them to navigate long distances and target extremely specific locations. A precise rendering, the painting retains a graphic, illustrative quality not unlike René Magritte, as if to remind us that this is not a window unto the world, only a picture... and yet perhaps a little more than that.

All together, the arranged objects, along with the architectural platforms that shape the context and direct the flow through the exhibition space, might be said to resemble a whimsical model of human consciousness—a speculation on how our minds interact with the physical domain. Historically and in the present, many of these models of how our brain works—from filing cabinets to icebergs to CPUs—rather than shedding scientific light, elucidate more about what we don't know. Socrates, famous for owning his own ignorance, suggests the mind is like an aviary full of wild birds, our untrapped thoughts aflutter. Rodrigo Hernández suggests that ideas become clearer and begin to hold true through feeling; it's not a coincidence that the title references a poem about desire by Sappho. The two-fold exhibition celebrates that special moment when a revelatory understanding is very near, but still eludes.

Rodrigo Hernández (Mexico City, Mexico, 1983) currently lives and works between Lisbon and Mexico City. He studied at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe, and at Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. He has been a fellow of the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung in Basel (2015), Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Cité International des Arts in Paris (2016) and Istanbul Modern (2019). Recent solo exhibitions include: *A Lyriiform Organ*, Antenna Space, Shanghai, CN (2024); *with what eyes?*, CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco, US (2024); *Flux of Things*, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, DE (2023); *El Espejo*, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, MX (2022); *I Am a Stranger and I Am Moving*, Swiss Institute/Offsite, New York, US (2022); *EL ESPEJO*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Medellin, CO (2022); *Petit-Musc*, Kunsthalle Kohta, Helsinki, FI (2021); *Pasado*, CIAJG, Guimaraes, PT (2021); *Dampclood*, Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam, NL (2020); *A Moth to a Flame*, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, US (2020); *What do I hear when I hear the flow of time?*, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City, MX (2019); *O mundo real não alça voo, Pivo*, São Paulo, BR (2018); *Who Loves You*, Kunsthalle Winterthur, CH (2018); *A Complete Unknown*, Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis, US (2018); *THE GOURD & THE FISH, SALTS*, Birsfelden, CH (2018); *The Shakiest of Things, kim?* Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, LV (2017); *I am nothing*, Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, DE (2016); *Every forest madly in love with the moon has a highway crossing it from one side to the other*, Kurimanzutto, Mexico City, MX (2016); *El Pequeño Centro*, Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City, MX (2016); *Go, Gentle Scorpio*, Parallel Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MX (2016); *What is the Moon?*, Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, NL (2014). His work has been exhibited in venues such as: Kunstmuseum Den Haag; Kunsthalle Münster; Göteborg Konsthall; Istanbul Modern; PinchukArtCenter, Kiev; GaMec, Bergamo; ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe; Kunstverein Nürnberg; Bonnefanten museum, Maastricht; Gladstone Gallery, Brussels; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel.



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“beautiful he stirs up still things” at Bel Ami, Los Angeles, 2025



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Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (1)*, 2025

Bronze

8 1/2 x 13 x 8 in (21.6 x 33 x 20.3 cm)



Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (1)*, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (1)*, 2025





Rodrigo Hernández  
*still things (2)*, 2025

Oil on wood

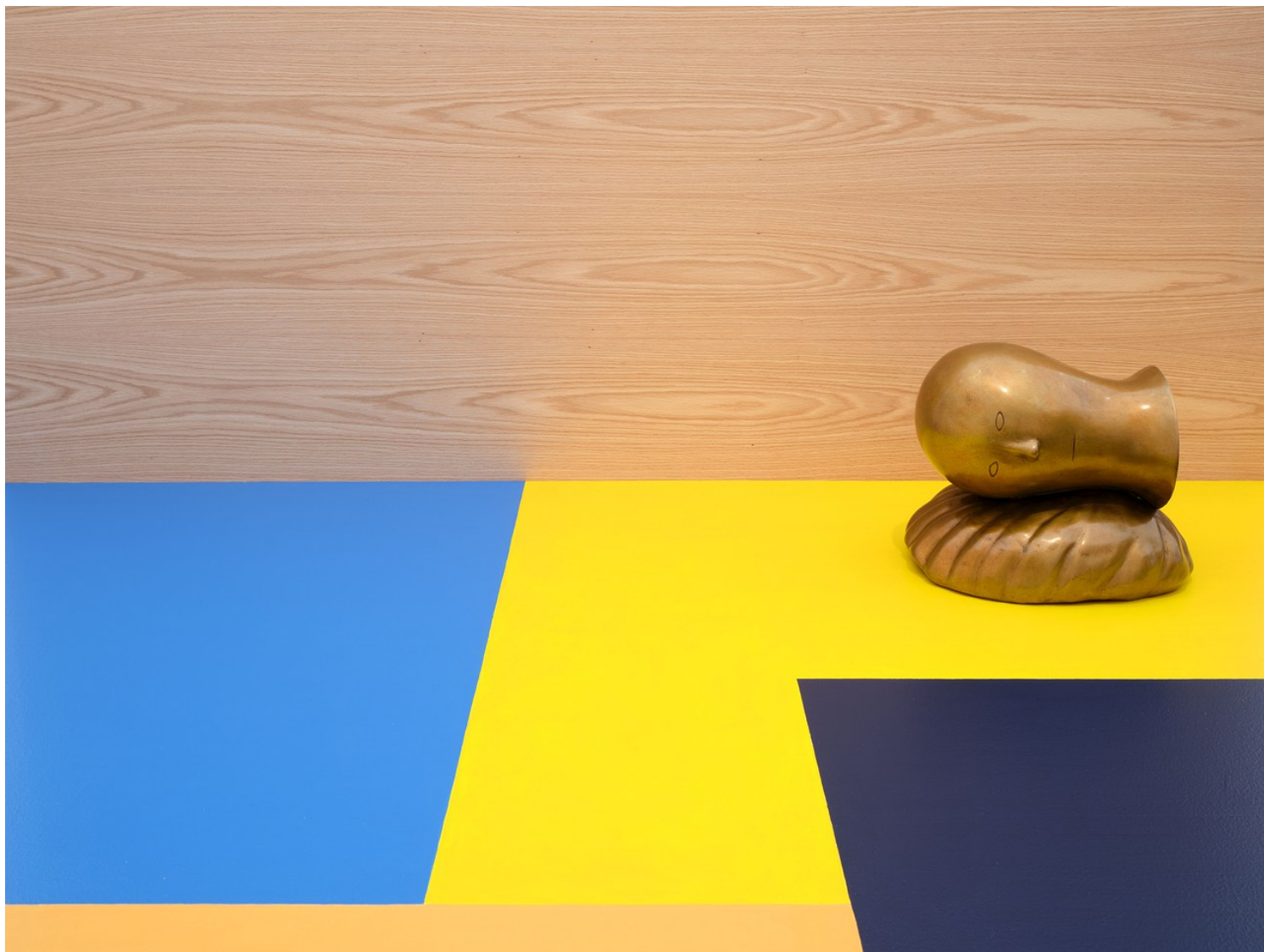
11 3/4 x 9 7/8 x 1 in (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



Rodrigo Hernández  
*still things (2)*, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
“Frieze Los Angeles” at Santa Monica Airport, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
“Frieze Los Angeles” at Santa Monica Airport, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
"Frieze Los Angeles" at Santa Monica Airport, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (2)*, 2025

Bronze

11 1/2 x 14 x 9 1/2 in (29.2 x 35.6 x 24.3 cm)



Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (2)*, 2025



Rodrigo Hernández  
*beautiful he (2)*, 2025

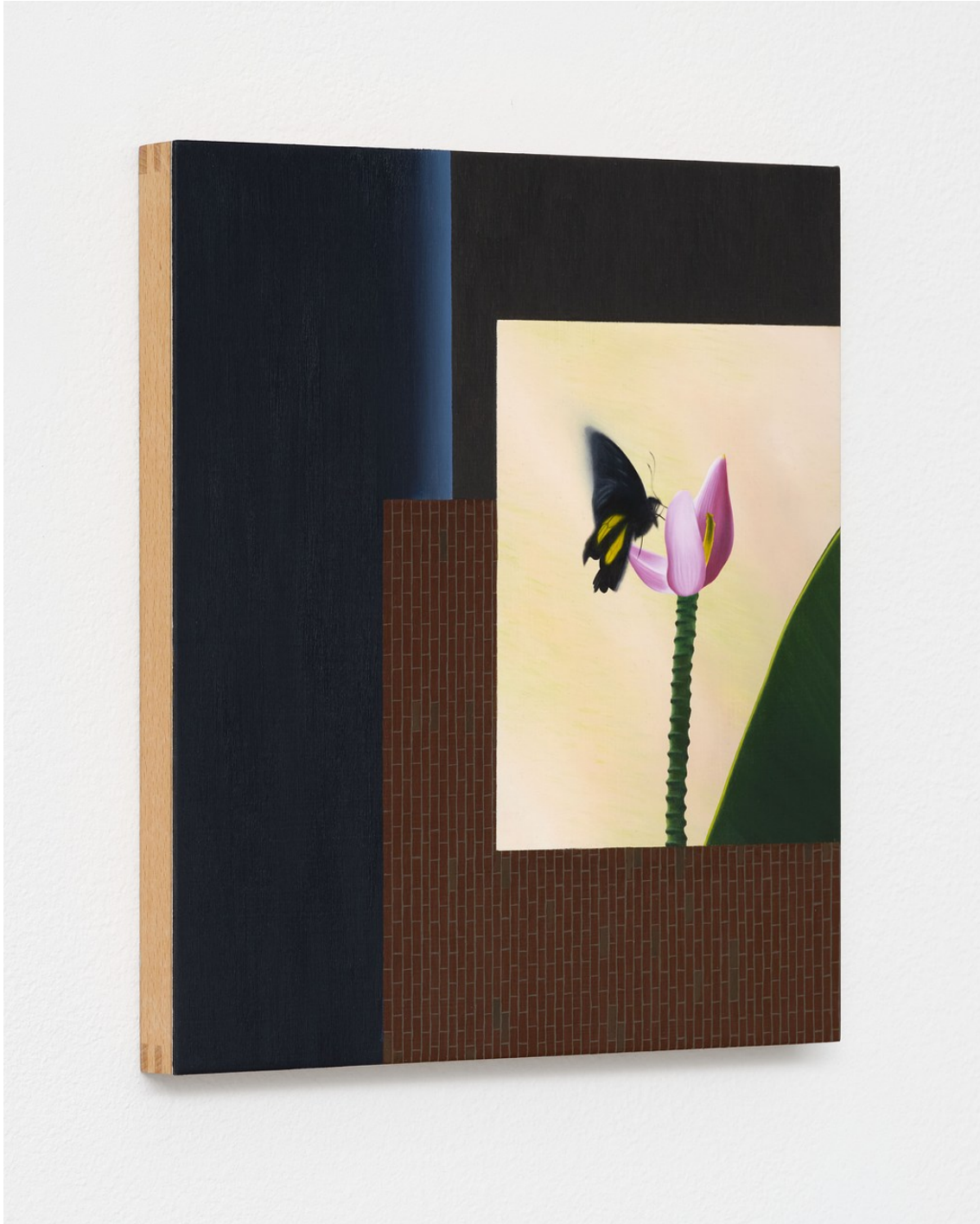




Rodrigo Hernández  
*still things (1)*, 2025

Oil on wood

13 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 1 in (35 x 30 x 2.5 cm)



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*still things (1)*, 2025